

Administration of Barack H. Obama, 2009

Remarks at Martin Luther King, Jr. Charter School in New Orleans, Louisiana
October 15, 2009

The President. What's going on, King? How's everybody doing? Well, what a warm greeting; I appreciate that, guys. Thank you so much.

It is great to see you. I just want you to know that I am so appreciative that your school has been such a good host during my visit. I had a chance to meet some of the students, your fellow students in there, and they told me all about what you guys are doing at the school.

And, you know, I'm especially glad to come back here because I remember 4 years ago, right after the storm, a lot of people here felt forgotten. But because everybody worked hard, everybody kept hopeful, everybody was determined to rebuild, you now see just a school that is doing much better than it was ever doing before the storm. So to all the parents and the community leaders who have helped rebuild, we are so grateful to you.

But my main message is for the students here. So I want everybody just for a second, listen up, real quiet. I think some of you know a little bit about me. You know, when I was growing up I didn't have my father at home; he had left us. We weren't rich. We didn't have a lot. But the one thing that my mother and my grandparents told me was that if I worked hard in school, if I loved to read and I loved math and I loved science and I studied hard, there wasn't anything that I couldn't do.

Now, just from meeting the young people here today I can tell that there're so many bright, smart, promising students here. But, you know, there are a lot of distractions out there. A lot of you think, "Well, you know, I don't want to study; I'm just going to play basketball." Or, "I don't want to study; I'm going to be a rap star."

I want all of you to know that the most important thing you can do for yourselves and for your community and for your country is to work hard in school and to treat each other with respect and treat yourself with respect, because I'm confident that if you all work very hard, then there's no reason why you can't be a doctor or a lawyer. There's no reason why you can't be the Secretary of Education or a principal of a school. There's no reason why you can't be a Congressman or a Senator. Maybe you can be the President of the United States. All right?

So I just got a promise in there—I want a promise from every single one of you that you guys are going to work hard in school each and every day. Give me that promise. You promise?

Audience members. Yes!

The President. You give me a pinkie promise?

Audience members. Yes!

The President. Pinkie promise. All right, you know, that's a big promise there. So I'm counting on you guys. I'm going to come back and check on you guys to make sure you've all been working hard. All right? Okay.

And I also just want you to know that Michelle and Malia and Sasha and our dog Bo—everybody says hello, and everybody wishes you well. All right, thank you, guys. All right.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:31 p.m.

Categories: Addresses and Remarks : Martin Luther King, Jr. Charter School in New Orleans, LA.

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